



**King County**

**Ron Sims**  
King County Executive

## **CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION**

*Mark Yango*  
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### **King County Charter Review Commission Rural/Local Subcommittee**

**Meeting Minutes – December 4, 2007**

**KC Chinook Bldg., 5:30pm-7:30pm**

The meeting of the King County Charter Review Commission, Rural/Local Subcommittee was called to order at 5:35 p.m. A quorum was present

#### **Commission members in attendance:**

Mike Lowry  
Gary Long  
Allan Munro  
John Jensen  
Jim English

#### **Absent:**

Tara Jo Heinecke  
John Groen  
Terry Lavender

#### **Staff :**

Corrie Watterson Bryant, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission  
Becky Spithill, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission

#### **Council and PAO Staff:**

Ross Baker, Chief of Staff, King County Council  
Mike Sinsky, Prosecuting Attorney's Office  
Rebecha Cusack, King County Council  
Joanne Rasmussen, King County Council  
Grace Reamer, Chief of Staff, Councilmember Kathy Lambert, District 3  
Tom Carpenter, President, Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council

## **1. Opening Remarks and Introductions**

As an FYI, John announced that the reception held for boards & commissions representatives was a very nice event. Councilmembers Lambert, von Reichbauer, Patterson and Gossett all spoke to the group present. It was amazing to see the number of boards and commissions at work in KC that were represented. Ross Baker thanked the commission members that were able to attend and let the committee know that the work being done by the commissioners is greatly appreciated by the council.

Goal of the meeting tonight is to come to consensus on the rural issues before the subcommittee.

## **2. Governance Options**

Corrie gave her presentation on Subarea Planning Commission.

- In looking at recommendations from the past, a subarea planning commission could be recommended with some sort of citizen body driving the process at the ground level and some sort of staffing at the county level to organize the commission.
- Subarea planning can be done with or without a commission or commissions; or it can be organized on a quasi-judicial decision-making level but there may be conflicts with the authority the charter gives the hearing examiner.
- Update on the rural services initiative which had been frozen in the 2008 Executive budget – it was not funded. The council is planning to establish an inter-branch committee that will examine the concept the Executive put forward and will work toward establishing a clear vision and policy framework regarding the county's delivery of services to rural areas, customer service, etc. The committee is slated to start sometime in 2008 and, hopefully, if we are still meeting we can work together with the council.

Gary Long gave a presentation on rural affairs he felt pertinent to the charter concept.

- He suggests that the commission create a cabinet-level position for a deputy executive of rural affairs.
- He sees the need for a grass-roots, rural, citizen-driven body representing several areas and/or in the context of subarea planning that's engaged in policy issues with the legislative side of the house. Perhaps similar to regional committees that the cities have that have standing set of representatives, a process for selection and a position with the council for review.
- He suggests that reverse contracting be looked at to help transition areas to become part of a city. However, he wasn't sure if that was in conflict with the charter Section 510.
  - Mike S advises that employment attorneys have suggested that inserting simple language in Section 510 that clarifies reverse contracting is not intended to restrict career service provisions.

John Jensen presented a summarization of Terry Lavender's notes on rural issues.

- Would like to continue the support of the UAC's since they are only 10 years old at this point and may still be trying to find that common ground to service all areas. To support the UAC's in part, she would like to amend the preamble to read: "*the county serves*

*both a vital and sustainable role, lifestyle, environment and economy, while providing regional and municipal services and performs dual roles of local government for the unincorporated area and regional government for specific services.”*

- Terry also agrees with the creation of a deputy executive for rural affairs to help support the preamble rather than the creation of a rural department.

#### Discussion

- Most seem to agree with the idea of creating a cabinet-level position of a deputy executive for rural affairs.
- Most common theme seemed to be that the rural areas feel neglected and not listened to. But, the rural areas have influence which does make a difference, but is there some way the charter can give them the feeling that there is finally support for their issues and gives them actual legislative authority.
- If all of the areas inside the urban growth area were in some municipal corporation and if it were a county policy, then perhaps having a rural affairs department that addresses all of the service issues that are outside the urban growth area would make sense. Municipal corporations should be able to represent the various unincorporated areas and the subarea planning should have actual power and the decision respected by legislative bodies. How are improved attendance, activity and participation facilitated better.
- Annexation funding becomes a challenge for cities – how the county finances services vs. how the annexing city will pay for services. Changes need to be made to the annexation initiative including reduced services approach which makes people angry and resistant but it's a much more complicated problem to implement as long as the citizens are allowed to make the decision on their governance, which is as it should be. It becomes more of an initiative question rather than economics.
- Need to ensure that the position can make tangible decisions to help solve problems and not be just another layer of government or governance power with no powers or authority to make changes that the citizens willing to work with. Keeping a shared vision for the rural areas may help in getting agreements with the citizens of the area.

**MOTION:** Recommend to the full commission a charter amendment establishing a deputy position for rural affairs.

Motion seconded                      VOTE:              Approved – unanimous              Opposed: 0

#### Amendments/Discussion:

- County executive and council would determine staffing as the current process for staffing executive cabinet positions.

Subarea planning process:

- Suggest that something be passed along to the full commission as it seems to be a critical issue but is there anything that can be effectively added to the charter along the lines of recommendations or charter amendment?
- Perhaps the balance in authority is dependent on the increased participation in the UAC's
- Perhaps creating the deputy executive will help in getting the bureaucracy to respond better, however, may not engage the people in the neighborhood necessarily. Need to think of something that's citizen driven, an organized process, and allows them to express what they want to allow in their neighborhood. It has to be advisory but still able to get council audience and acceptance/response.
- Perhaps assign subarea planning to the UAC if it exists in that area and have the same sort of process mechanism used by the regional committees for planning revisions where a recommendation is either overridden or rejected by a supermajority of council vote or accepted as is.
- Legally, the general principle is that the planning decisions in land-use need to be made by the legislative authority and the more an entity, other than the legislative authority of the county, has actual authority, there are legal problems that are raised. Because of statutory laws, the county is limited in terms of other entities can do, other than the council in making land-use planning decision.
- Perhaps the focus needs to be on community planning rather than land-use planning which would address more of the infrastructure of a community.

ACTION:

Staff to do a more comprehensive paper on subarea planning/community planning to give options on the set up and to give a sense of whether the issue should be a charter amendment or ordinance.

Preamble:

**MOTION:** Move to have legal staff and staff look at preamble language suggested by Terry Lavender and to see how it fits in charter.

Action was seconded      VOTE:      Approve: Unanimous      Oppose: 0

Discussion:

- Look at language and wordsmith to make it feel that both regional and rural issues are of equal importance and to decide where to put the language, whether it be the preamble or in the body of the charter.
- Keep the language at rural and regional levels rather than unincorporated urban area because unincorporated urban area seems to be the wrong detail.

- Make certain that the language doesn't take the county off the hook for the unincorporated urban areas as the county still needs to work with them in a positive way that they don't feel neglected.
- Would like to see the word "sustainability" kept in the wording as that seemed to be a theme in many of the outreach meetings.

**ACTION:** Staff is to write up different options to give the committee a list to look at with different wording. This will be passed through the PA's office for legality.

**Reverse Contracting:**

- There are underlying legal complications beyond the charter that involves bargaining that requires going outside our unit to provide jobs outside the bargaining unit. There are also issues that this is being done in a land-use context with having cities administer land-use codes because of jurisdictional cross-overs.

**MOTION:** Motion that requests legal counsel to provide language that amends the contracting authority of the county described in section 510 to make clear that it is not intended to limit the county's ability to enter into contracts with cities for provisions of county services.

Motion seconded                      VOTE:              Approved: Unanimous              Opposed: 0

**Misc. Issues:**

- Open space amendment will be discussed in a future meeting

**Next Meeting:**              **tentatively set for Wednesday, January 23, 2008**

Meeting adjourned:    7:05 pm

Respectfully submitted by:    Charlotte Ohashi

**From:** Yango, Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 06, 2007 11:32 AM  
**To:** Triplett, Kurt  
**Cc:** Watterson Bryant, Corrie  
**Subject:** FW: Recap of Dec 4 Rural/Local Subcommittee meeting

**From:** Watterson Bryant, Corrie  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 05, 2007 5:26 PM  
**To:** English, Jim; Groen, John; Jensen, John; Lavender, Terry; Long, Gary; Lowry, Mike; Munro, Allan  
**Cc:**  
 Cusack, Rebecha; Rasmussen, Joanne; Reamer, Grace; Sinsky, Mike; Spithill, Becky; Tom Carpenter; Wagner, Nick; Yango, Mark  
**Subject:** Recap of Dec 4 Rural/Local Subcommittee meeting

Commissioners,

Following is a brief recap of our meeting last night. Thanks to everyone for a focused and productive discussion!

The subcommittee decided to pursue four issues at this time. I will further investigate each issue and prepare briefing papers for our next meeting. We'll also update the full commission on our progress at the December 11 meeting, which may generate some discussion. However, we are not yet bringing these issues to the commission as formal proposals.

1. Create a new Cabinet-level position within the Office of the County Executive: the **Deputy Executive for Rural Affairs**. The purpose of this Charter change would be to provide a direct and powerful voice for rural citizens inside the Executive's office. The implementation of the position, including any additional staffing, would be determined by the Council and Executive. (A unanimous vote was taken on this issue.)

2. **Revise the existing Charter preamble** to acknowledge the importance of maintaining King County's rural lifestyle, and reinforce the dual but equal role of the County as both a rural/local government and a regional service provider. Terry Lavender's model language was to add: "serve both a vital and sustainable rural life style, environment, and economy while providing regional, municipal services and performing the dual roles of local government for the unincorporated areas and regional government for specific services." Staff will craft a number of different options for the preamble language, in consultation with stakeholders. (A unanimous vote was taken on this issue.)

3. Amend Section 510 (the Personnel System) of the Charter to explicitly permit **intergovernmental/ reverse contracting**, which would allow the County to contract with cities to provide services in unincorporated areas. Though this change would not remove all barriers to intergovernmental contracting, it would clarify that the Charter is not one of the barriers. Legal counsel has been requested to provide language for the amendment. (A unanimous vote was taken on this issue.)

4. Consider implementing more extensive **subarea/community planning** processes in the unincorporated areas. Subarea planning would be a citizen-driven advisory process to give unincorporated area residents the opportunity to develop a comprehensive vision for their community. Commissioners doubted that subarea planning would rise to the level of a Charter amendment, but that more research was still warranted. Staff will provide a paper on this subject, with concrete options for possible action. (A vote was *not* taken on this issue.)

**\*\*Please note that the subcommittee has scheduled an additional meeting, for Wednesday January 23.\*\*** Our next meeting will be **Tuesday January 8**. The meetings will take place from 5:30-7:30pm in Chinook 126. I will send out the briefing papers for your review at least a few days before our January 8 meeting.

Thanks to everyone for your great work on this committee!

Corrie

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 Office of King County Executive Ron Sims  
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